



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, May 4, 2017
Florence Ely Nelson Desert Park
8950 E. Pinnacle Peak Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85255**

PRESENT: Chairperson Bob Frost, Commissioners Bobby Alpert, Jace McKeighan, and Cynthia Wenstrom

ABSENT: Mike Milillo, Vice Chair, Commissioners Steve Dodd, and Con Englehorn,

STAFF: Bill Murphy, Director of Community Services; Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Sr. Trails Planner; Natural Resources Coordinators Yvonne Massman, Robert Graves, and Recreation Leader III Kelly Hayes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Frost called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present as noted above.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jason Alexander, representing the No DDC organization, asked to be agendaized for a future MSPC meeting to make a presentation outlining legal and historical information regarding the Desert Discovery Center project.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COMMISSIONER WENSTROM MOVED TO APPROVE THE APRIL 6, 2017 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER MCKEIGHAN SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY A VOTE OF FOUR (4) TO ZERO (0).

5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Mike Nolan said that program chairs would highlight their achievements for the year during the annual MSC/City of Scottsdale meeting scheduled for May 16th. He invited Commission members to attend the Field Institute presentation being held on Wednesday, May 17th from

9:00 a.m. to noon at Scottsdale Community College. New program chairs and assistant chairs went through an orientation last week and have begun planning for next season.

Mr. Nolan mentioned that the Conservancy has a memorandum of understanding with ASU over biodiversity fellows in which the Conservancy and ASU sponsor grad students interested in doing research in the Preserve. A recent MOU has been put out across all of ASU that is expected to expand the program beyond its current relationship with the School of Life Sciences.

May 13th, a bird watching event will take place throughout the preserve, including evening owl watching. Mr. Nolan offered to connect interested Commission members with experienced birders if they are interested in participating.

Mr. Nolan briefly discussed the growth in the relationship between the Conservancy and the MSPC since he took over the MSC and thanked the Commission and the City for their dedication.

Commission members thanked Mr. Nolan for his efforts at the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy over the years and wished him well in his future endeavors.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT/ENDOWMENT UPDATE

Removed by Staff.

6a. FIRE SEASON PREPARATIONS

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, gave an update on fire season preparations in the Preserve. He noted that this year has been the strongest wild flower season in approximately 20 years. Wild flowers, high grass along trails, and areas adjacent to streets and driveways are prime fuel for wildfires. The City meets regularly with the fire department and is doubling efforts this year to evaluate and protect high risk areas of the Preserve.

Jim Ford, Deputy Fire Chief, talked about the danger of flash fuels in the Preserve and creating defensible areas in high risk areas such as along trailheads and roadways. He said that the Wildland hand crews are being reestablished as part of Scottsdale Fire Department's strategic plan. He noted that the Preserve is closed each year for 4th of July due to fireworks dangers. Closures have only occurred two other times in the history of the Preserve as a precaution because of limited resources and are not anticipated this season. Any closures would have to be approved by City Council.

Mr. Ekblaw noted that "Extreme Danger" fire signs have been put up throughout the Preserve. Deputy Chief Ford said "High Danger" signs are in place in other areas.

Commission members were given an opportunity to ask questions. Deputy Chief Ford explained that a focus will be placed on creating defensible space near unmanned trailheads such as Fraesfield and Tom's Thumb. Mr. Hamilton said that signs are placed throughout the Preserve in areas where there is high grass. Commissioner McKeighan noted that the new trails and particularly Legend Trail have grass up to the trail edge.

Deputy Chief Ford said that the Fire Code prohibits sky lanterns throughout the City.

7. COMMERCIAL USE POLICY

Removed by staff.

7a. PUBLIC OUTREACH IN THE PRESERVE

Kelly Hayes, Recreation Leader III, gave an update on activities of the newly reinstated Dog Committee. The committee's primary focus is to address issues such as dogs off leash, dogs that are in danger of overheating, and picking up dog waste. On Saturday, April 8th from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., the Dog Committee hosted Dog Day at the trailheads and spent time educating hikers on dog safety. The Pin Flag Campaign ran from April 1st through April 15th. Stewards and staff placed pin flags by any dog waste or waste bags in specified trail areas in an effort to create a visual message for hikers. It is anticipated that both programs will be put on twice a year.

Share the Trail Day was held on Saturday, April 8th. Patrollers and staff interacted with trail users about trail etiquette.

Commission members briefly discussed trail usage and interactions between hikers, bikers, and equestrians.

8. TOM'S THUMB TRAILHEAD SUMMER PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, reviewed the schematic site plan of Tom's Thumb Trailhead parking improvements. The consulting team has slightly adjusted the master site plan to address the need for additional capacity. The drive aisles will be asphalt instead of stabilized DG because DG tends to erode. Parking closures will rotate through construction, which is expected to be completed by fall.

9. STAFF REPORTS

- **Southern Area Activities**

Robert Graves, Natural Resources Coordinator, said that the new area model donated by Great Globe, LLC, has been installed at Gateway Trailhead. The model is up to date with all new trails and has been left uncovered so that users can touch and feel the details.

Mr. Graves shared photographs of graffiti found at Gateway Loop on April 9th. Staff is working on removal.

The City has received positive feedback from neighbors near Sunrise Trailhead since no parking signs were installed along 144th Way in August of 2016.

- **Rawhide Wash Rain Gauge – Maricopa County**

Scott Hamilton, Sr. Trails Planner, said that the Flood Control District of Maricopa County has requested to install a new rain gauge along the WAPA power line adjacent to the Rawhide Wash. The City is working with them on an agreement. Mr. Hamilton noted that the City currently has two rain gauges. The data they provide beneficial to the City in monitoring flooding

following monsoon storms, to County Flood Control, and will benefit the Field Institute's research and data gathering related to plants and wild life.

- **Trails Construction and Maintenance Update**

Scott Hamilton, Sr. Trails Planner, presented photographs of the completed gabions at Tom's Thumb. The maintenance crew removed loose rocks along trails in the interior portion of the McDowells, removed berms from the side of trails. They also cleaned out existing drain dips and added new ones.

The Power line Trail Alternative construction has begun.

Phase 3 Trails construction is completed for the year. Next steps include installation of directional signs and updating the northern area map. Preserve staff and the Transportation Department will continue northern area connections discussions throughout the summer.

- **Design of Trailhead Status**

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, said that he expects plans for Fraesfield Trailhead and Granite Mountain Trailhead to be prepared by June and the municipal use public process to continue into the fall. The Pima/Dynamite Trailhead plans are expected soon. The 69 kv installation from Pima/Dynamite to 118th Street/Lone Mountain is on schedule and staff will meet with APS in approximately two weeks. Road preparation and vegetation clearing will begin May 30th. Pole installation is expected to be completed in summer with wire stringing in September/October; the lines will be energized in late spring 2018.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Ekblaw explained that the three trailheads currently have power and Fraesfield and Pima/Dynamite will have water, but Granite will only have tank water for maintenance purposes. A fire abatement plan as part of the APS project will include vegetation removal. The old trail along the boundary line of the Preserve will be left in place and the trail will be signed.

Upcoming May 16 COS/Conservancy Yearly Review Meeting

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, announced that the annual meeting between the Conservancy and the City of Scottsdale is scheduled for May 16, 2017 at this location beginning at 10:00 a.m.

- **2017/18 FY Preserve Budget**

Bill Murphy, Community Services Director, presented a ten-year evaluation of the Preserve budget including personnel services, contractual services, commodities and capital outlays. He highlighted in the 2017/18 line item there are 3.57 FTEs, which is reflective of part-time hours savings of \$29,000 left over from Parks and Recreation. Those dollars have been reallocated to bring in part-time staff in October, November, and December and to augment full-time staff with coverage through April 2018.

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chairperson Frost invited Commissioners to make comments and ask questions on topics including going back to agenda items.

11. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Trailhead Host Concept Follow-up Discussion
Fraesfield and Granite Mountain Trailhead Design and Public Meeting Process
Financial Report/Endowment Update
Desert Discovery Center
Commercial Use Policy
Pima/Dynamite Trailhead Design and Public Meeting Process

Mr. Ekblaw noted that the Commission would not have any regular meetings during the months of July and August; however, there could be a special meeting scheduled for an update on developments with the Desert Discovery Center.

12. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

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